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UNCLAS BANGKOK 005271

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FTA MEETING WITH DEPUTY PM

11. (SBU) On August 16, Ambassador Boyce called on Deputy Prime Minister and Commerce Minister Somkid Jatusripitak to express USG concerns about the slow pace of FTA negotiations, explain that an FTA with the U.S. must be a single undertaking (the Thai-Japan FTA model is not an option for us), the necessity of structuring the FTA on a positive list basis, and the express requirement in Trade Promotion Authority for an FTA labor chapter.

12. (SBU) Somkid replied that now that the Thai-Japan FTA talks "are finished", he would devote his attention to RTG talks with the U.S. and had already scheduled a meeting of his team for next week to discuss ways of accelerating the pace of negotiations. He did not directly respond to the Ambassador's specific points, but pointed out that he and his staff present in the room had all spent a lot of time in the U.S.: "you know us and we know you; both of us need to understand each other." Regarding the negative vs. positive list issue, Somkid intimated that perhaps some sort of compromise formula could be found.

13. (SBU) Comment. For the first time Somkid indicated that he would fully engage in our FTA "now that I have time," and insisted it was important to his government to complete these negotiations. We suspect that his active participation in the ultimately successful (from the RTG viewpoint) talks with Japan may have encouraged him to play a more active role. Others have told us that one of the reason's he was moved from the Finance Ministry in the recent government reshuffle was to make him more directly responsible for FTA matters. We believe that we should quietly work with him on issues that prove too difficult for the Thai negotiators and test his stated inclination to engage and solve problems.  
BOYCE